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## INGESTION OF HERBS DURING PREGNANCY AND CONFINEMENT PERIOD AMONG MOTHERS WHO DELIVERED AT UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA MEDICAL CENTRE (UKMMC)

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### Background:

The potential harm of herbs to the pregnant mothers and their foetuses as well as the effect of herbs taken by nursing mothers on their babies remains largely unknown. It is perceived that herbal medicines ingestion during pregnancy and confinement period is a common practice among Malaysian mothers. The objective of this study was to explore the usage of herbal medicines during pregnancy and confinement period among mothers who delivered at UKMMC.

### Materials and Methods:

This cross sectional study was conducted between October and December 2010. The subjects were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. They were interviewed twice, post delivery and six to eight weeks later.

### Results:

A total of 323 mothers were recruited into this study. The prevalence of herbal ingestion during pregnancy and confinement period were 13.9% and 52.9%, respectively. The commonly used herb during pregnancy was Chinese traditional herbs whilst during confinement period were ubat periuk, akar kayu and matured ginger. Significantly more Chinese ( $p=0.01$ ) and Malay ( $p=0.04$ ) mothers ingested herbs during pregnancy and confinement period, respectively. Significantly more non-primigravida mothers took herbs during pregnancy ( $p=0.01$ ) and confinement period ( $p=0.01$ ). Herbal ingestion by mothers during the confinement period was associated with higher occurrence of neonatal jaundice ( $p=0.01$ ).

### Conclusion:

Herbal ingestion either during pregnancy or confinement period was common among mothers who delivered at UKMMC. It was associated with a higher rate of neonatal jaundice when taken during the confinement period.

### Key words:

herbal medicine, pregnancy, confinement period, neonatal jaundice.